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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-seventh year

Identical letters dated 20 June 2012 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write to you in follow-up to our previous letters regarding Israel's illegal settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the accompanying insidious campaign of Israeli settler terror against the Palestinian people. I regret to inform you of continuing illegal measures by Israel, the occupying Power, aimed at the further expropriation of Palestinian land, destruction of Palestinian homes and properties, and the intimidation and displacement of the Palestinian civilian population.

In this regard, acts of aggression and provocation by extremist Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and properties, including homes, agricultural orchards, mosques, churches and cemeteries, continue unabated. Yesterday, yet another mosque in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was attacked by Israeli settlers. Villagers in Jaba awoke to find their mosque ablaze and the desecration of its walls with graffiti declaring "Ulpana War", "The war has begun" and "Pay the price", clearly indicating in this vile act the hand of settlers, who have repeatedly destroyed Palestinian civilian properties. Many similar violent and destructive actions have been committed as deliberate retribution, or so-called "price-tag" attacks, against the Palestinian civilian population in response to Israeli measures regarding illegal settlement outposts.

The impunity of the extremist settlers is no doubt bolstered by the Israeli Government's failure and unwillingness to hold them accountable for the constant terror they are wreaking. We reiterate that Israel, the occupying Power, is responsible for all of the crimes committed by the settlers it has transferred to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in grave breach of international humanitarian law. We call for immediate action by the occupying Power to hold the perpetrators accountable and to act to avert the continuation of such criminal, provocative attacks, which are aggravating tensions and religious sensitivities between the two sides and risk further destabilizing the situation on the ground.

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The situation also continues to be exacerbated by the continuation of demolition of Palestinian homes and properties throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, by Israel, the occupying Power. These actions, which constitute grave violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention and human rights law and which are causing severe hardship for hundreds more Palestinian families, are also heightening already-high frustrations and mistrust. We express our total condemnation of these illegal measures and draw the international community's attention to this matter of grave concern, with an appeal for urgent, collective action aimed at compelling Israel to end such unlawful, destructive policies and practices.

This week alone, the Israeli occupying forces handed down demolition and confiscation orders against nearly 100 Palestinian properties. On 12 June, a mass demolition order was issued against the entire village of Susiya in the southern West Bank for the destruction of all 50 buildings in the village, including homes, tents, a kindergarten, a health clinic and the village's renewable energy system. If carried out, this demolition would result in the forced displacement of the village's 350 Palestinians, including 120 children. The occupying Power is using the pretext of protecting the adjacent illegal settlement as the basis for carrying out this unlawful, immoral action, while in reality it is the Palestinian civilian population that is in dire need of protection from the extremist settlers, who continue to attack the village, which at the same time is being encroached upon by the illegal settlements and outposts in Masafer Yatta near Al-Khalil.

The occupying Power also recently issued orders for the confiscation of land in the town of Al-Khader south of Bethlehem. If the land is seized, it will not only negatively affect the rightful Palestinian owners, but will also affect farmers, who will not be able to reach their property located in the same area. Also, in the Bethlehem area, on 18 June, occupying forces demolished several domestic tents and sheds in the town of Al-Ubeidiya. This was preceded by yet another demolition in Occupied East Jerusalem, where the occupying forces demolished a 700 square metre complex of sheep barns, which were the only source of income for five families, in addition to destroying 20 tons of barley. Also, in Occupied East Jerusalem, Israel continues its illegal, provocative measures in the Silwan neighbourhood, where approval was given on 18 June for the construction of a 9,000 square metre tourist centre in Silwan, putting the neighbourhood at risk for further confiscation of land and the further marginalization and suffocation of its Palestinian residents. Furthermore, on 18 June, the occupying forces issued 35 demolition orders to Palestinians in the village of Beit Ummar, which is located near to the illegal Israeli settlement of "Karmi Zur", which continues to encroach upon the village's lands, and issued demolition orders against four residential tents and a solar and wind power system in the southern village of Tuba.

It is abundantly clear that all of these illegal measures are part and parcel of Israel's schemes aimed at seizing more Palestinian land, displacing the Palestinian civilian population and establishing more facts on the ground in order to entrench its control and de facto annexation of that land, thereby prejudicing the outcome of any negotiation for a final peace settlement. As we have cautioned on numerous prior occasions, we reiterate that all such illegal colonization measures by Israel are seriously damaging the viability of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, making its physical attainability more and more impossible and undermining any attempts to resuscitate the political process to achieve that solution.

The international community, including the Security Council, has a direct responsibility, in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, to act to bring an end to the ongoing Israeli violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Serious, collective efforts are urgently needed in order to bring an end to the ongoing hardships and dispossession being endured by the Palestinian people under Israel's occupation, and to salvage the two-State solution as the core of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement that brings an end to the Israeli occupation since 1967 and ensures the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and freedom in their independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In closing, in follow-up to my letter of 18 June 2012, I regret to inform you that Israel, the occupying Power, also continues its military attacks against the Gaza Strip, causing more death and injury to Palestinian civilians in this besieged area of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Today, Israeli air strikes on Gaza City killed a 14-year-old boy, Mou'men Al-Adam, and injured two other people, including the boy's father, and an air strike earlier in the day on Rafah led to the killing of a 21-year-old man, Ghaleb Awwad Armeelat. Yesterday, two boys, Muhammad Bassam Abu Mueliq, age 18, and Yousef Al-Talbani, age 16, were also killed by the occupying forces in central Gaza, south of Al-Maghazi refugee camp, after Israeli tanks entered and fired upon the area. These military attacks bring the total of Palestinians killed by Israel since the latest escalation began on Sunday to eight people, with at least 20 more wounded.

The international community, including the Security Council, has a duty to uphold international law, including with regard to the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict in all circumstances. Israel, the occupying Power, must be demanded to cease all its military operations and illegal measures against the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in the Gaza Strip, and must be demanded to abide by international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, without exception. This is necessary for the de-escalation of the situation to prevent the onset of yet another cycle of deadly violence in which more innocent civilian lives will be lost.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 430 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 18 June 2012 (A/ES-10/558-S/2012/450) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda Abdelhady **Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.